

To Flood or Not to Flood: A look at Innovative Acequia Irrigation, was the topic of February's Agriculture Collaborative Meeting. Over 50 people were in attendance to learn about local drip irrigation projects and how drip can be used successfully when irrigating with surface water.

Meeting Highlights

Minor Morgan, of the Rio Grande Community Farm (RGCF), gave a presentation on a new sub-surface drip irrigation project at the Farm. Some major points from his presentation:

- RGCF will always use flood irrigation, but in conjunction with sub-surface drip irrigation.
- While flood irrigation works well to germinate seeds, drip is best used once plants are established.
- Goals of the drip project include: demonstrating water saving potentials, increasing the volume of food produced, extending the growing season, and showing the effectiveness of drip for small scale organic acreage.
- Using both well and surface water in the same drip system requires additional cost through materials and permitting.
- Sub-surface drip systems require you to practice "no till" farming methods.

David Gensler, of the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD), gave a presentation on the history of the MRGCD and how their delivery of water can work with drip irrigation systems. Some major points from his presentation:

- MRGCD efficiency improvements, which began in 1997 to address water scarcity and endangered species issues, have resulted in significant reductions of surface water use by MRGCD users.
- The advantages of drip irrigation include increased production rates, increased efficiency of water at the root zone, and control of salt content in the soil.
- Drawbacks of drip irrigation include increased energy costs from pumping and limitations in surface water availability due to MRGCD delivery schedules.
- MRGCD has to deliver water by gravity to its users, and how that water is then distributed/used on the farm for beneficial use is up to each user. That means that you can divert water onto your property into a diversion box and then pump it into a drip system, but you cannot stick a pump directly into the acequia.

Drip Irrigation Resources

- [Subsurface Drip Irrigation](#) (SDI) Demonstration and Research Project at the University of Arizona.
- NRCS article on the drip irrigation projects at [Sichler Farms](#) in Socorro, NM.
- Wikipedia page on [drip irrigation](#) , with a great section on the history of its development and use.

Mark your calendars for the next Agriculture Collaborative meeting, which will be held on March 11, 2009 at the MRCOG offices located at [809 Copper Ave NW](#) . The topic for the upcoming meeting is

Planning Smart: Spring Business and Crop Planning

with speakers Don Bustos, of the American Friends Service Committee, and Kim Blueher, director of lending at WESST.

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